

Message Text

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62 R
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SS-20 L-03 INR-10 SPC-03 SAM-01

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R 131040Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5897
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY ACCRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0244

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, DM
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CHANGES IN MRGD

FOR AF/W - LOUGHRAN FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE 026495 (NOTAL)

1. SITUATION NO CLEARER NOW THAN THAT REPORTED IN COTONOU 0190. CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS WITH WELL PLACED DAHOMEAN, FRENCH AND OTHER SOURCES HAVE CONVINCED US IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, IF NOT FRUITLESS, TO COME UP WITH LOGICAL (READ WESTERN) POLITICAL ANALYSIS WHICH WILL HAVE ANY VALIDITY. THERE ARE MANY FORCES AT WORK, SOME OF THEM CONTRADICTORY, SUCH AS PERSONAL AMBITION, PATRIOTISM, AND TRIBAL AND FAMILY LOYALTIES. ONE SIGNIFICANT EVENT DURING PAST WEEK, HOWEVER, WAS FOUR-DAY TOUR BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU THROUGH OUEME, ATLANTIQUE AND MONO DEPARTMENTS WHERE HE GAVE SIX TO EIGHT OFF-THE-CUFF SPEECHES DAILY. AS SUGGESTED IN PARA 4 OF OUR 0190, KEREKOU HAS DECIDED TO FIGHT. HIS TOURNEE WAS EFFORT TO GIVE HIM MAXIMUM PUBLIC EXPOSURE AS FATHER OF DAHOMEAN REVOLUTION. HIS SPEECHES, DISJOINTED AND SOMETIMES INCOMPREHENSIBLE, WERE NEVERTHELESS SINCERE AND WELCOMED
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BY PEASANTS IN COUNTRYSIDE. HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY (A) TO LABEL

PROGRESSIVES ARE COMMUNISTS ACTING UNDER FOREIGN INFLUENCE, (B) TO TELL MINISTERS TO ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS DECISION MAKERS, (C) TO MAKE IT CLEAR HE WOULD FIGHT IF CHALLENGED, AND (D) GENERALLY TO PROJECT A THOROUGHLY REVOLUTIONARY IMAGE. JUST HOW MUCH THIS OPERATION WILL STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION IS QUESTIONABLE. POPULAR SUPPORT HAS LIMITED VALUE. IT IS MILITARY AND URBAN STRENGTH THAT COUNTS, AND THE RURAL MASSES WILL AS ALWAYS SIT IDLY BY WHEN THAT STRENGTH IS PUT TO USE. IMPORTANT POINT TO EXAMINE IS WHETHER AIKPE AND COMPANY WILL RESORT TO FORCE AND PROBABLY BLOODSHED TO REMOVE KEREKOU WHO APPEARS TO HAVE LOWERED GAUNTLET. OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT DAHOMEAN ABHORRENCE OF VIOLENCE, COUPLED WITH UNCERTAINTY

AIKPE AND HIS FOLLOWERS MUST HAVE OVER COMPLETE LOYALTY OF THEIR FORCES

MANY OF WHO ARE NORTHERNERS, MAY DETER SHOWDOWN WITH KEREKOU FOR AN UNDERTERMINED PERIOD. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IT NOW APPEARS KEREKOU'S POWERS WILL BE MUCH MORE LIMITED AND AIKPE'S ENHANCED. A GOOD INDICATION OF THIS IS COMPLETE CHANGE OF PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION ENGINEERED BY AIKPE AND APPROVED BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FEBRUARY 11. THOSE CONTROLLING THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL BE CIVILIANS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE REVOLUTION AND OVERSEEN BY LOCAL COUNCILS OF YOUTH, WORKERS AND

WOMEN, AND BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR HIMSELF.

2. RE YOUR QUESTION:

(A) RODRIGUEZ - HE IS NOT ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, BUT ASSISTANT TO REPEAT TO CHIEF OF STAFF WITH RESPONSIBILITIES OF COORDINATING WORK OF 1ST, 3RD, 4TH AND 5TH BUREAUS, AND OF ORGANIZATION

AND INSTRUCTION IN ARMY. AS YOU POINT OUT, HE IS CLOSE FRIEND OF KEREKOU, AND AS SUCH HAS PROBABLY BEEN GIVEN ASSIGNMENT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS FOR KEREKOU. HIS REPUTATION IS SUCH, HOWEVER, THAT HIS INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT MILITARY IS ZERO.

(B) RESURGENCE OF RADICAL STRENGTH WITHIN OFFICER CORPS --

BADJOGOUME'S ARREST MAY WELL INDICATE THIS IF IT IS PART OF AIKPE'S STRATEGY TO ENCOURAGE BADJOGOUME'S MARTYRDOM TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR INTELLECTUAL AND OTHER RADICALS. AFTER ALL, BADJOGOUME IS CONFIDENTIAL

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LOCKED UP IN KANDI FOR 65 DAYS AT KEREKOU'S ORDER FOR BREACH OF MILITARY

DISCIPLINE. INTERESTING TO NOTE HERE THAT COMMANDER OF KANDI GARRISON IS LOYAL SUPPORTER OF KOUANDETE WHOSE FOLLOWERS HAVE BECOME MORE AND MORE ACTIVE IN PAST MONTH. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT KOUANDETE RETAINS SOME INFLUENCE IN MILITARY, AND THAT HE AND KEREKOU COULD COOPERATE.

(C) DAHOMEY REVERTING TO PRE-OCTOBER '72 PATTERN -- IF BY
THIS YOU MEAN (A) RETURN OF OLDER GENERATION OF ARMY OFFICERS AND
TRADITIONAL CIVILIAN POLITICIANS, (B) REVERSAL OF CURRENT ATTITUDE
TOWARDS FRANCE, AND (C) SUBSTITUTION OF FORMER PRO-WESTERN POLICY FOR
NON-ALIGNMENT, THE ANSWER IS NO. AS WE HAVE REPORTED MANY TIMES,
THIS YOUNG GENERATION OF MILITARY OFFICERS WILL PROBABLY RETAIN POWER
FOR INDEFINITE FUTURE. THERE MAY BE CHANGES IN FACES, INCLUDING
KEREKOU, BUT THE BASIC POLICY OF STRIVING TOWARDS NATIONAL UNITY
AND CREATING A DAHOMEAN IDENTITY WILL REMAIN.
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